

# Early Settlement in Buffalo County

## Timeline

1813 – First fur trappers traveled through along the Platte.

1830

1846 – First Mormon wagon train

1848 – Ft Kearny opened. A corner of the Military Reservation was on the north side of the Platte River in what is now Buffalo Co.

1850 – No census records for what is now Nebraska

May have been white people living in Buffalo County but there is no record. People came through on the Mormon Trail, if they liked it they stayed or came back; squatted

1854 – Nebraska Territory was created

– Buffalo County created by Nebraska Territorial Legislature; Hall Co took care of its business until 1870

1857 – All land in Buffalo County except that corner of the Ft. Kearny Military Reservation were considered Indian land

1858 – Wood River Center – Joseph Johnson

James Boyd came to Buffalo County to the Boyd Ranch

How long had the ranch been there? Unknown by Bassett

1860 – Olivers came from England

Spent winter in a log cabin along the Wood; may have been a deserted cabin

Western Stage Line extended west to Ft. Kearny.

First stop outside fort was at Wood River Center

1860 Census – Buffalo County

Nebraska Center only address in the county

July 8 – 5 residences including James Boyd, wife & child and 3 unoccupied places = 20

July 9 – 5 residences and 1 unoccupied = 21

July 11 – 13 residences including Joseph Johnson & Henry Dugdale & 3 unoccupied = 55

July 13 – 6 residences & 5 unoccupied = 18 people

29 residences and 12 unoccupied places = 114 people

1. James Boyd & family
2. Walter Barrit & family
3. Mehitable Wilson & children
4. Calvin Tompson & family
5. John Evans & family
6. James Crain & brother
7. Catherine Francis & children
8. Henry Peck & family
9. Robert Bean
10. George Robinson & family
11. Henry Dugdale & family
12. Charles Carter & family
13. John J(?)ames & family
14. Joseph Wolff & family
15. Richard Brett
16. Joseph Johnson & family
17. James Lewis & Samuel Rice
18. George Williams +3
19. William Adams
20. Joseph Wagner & family
21. Patrick Gunn
22. Henry Sharp & family
23. Thomas Page & family
24. Jesse & Wm Eldridge
25. James Jackson & family
26. Charles Huylar & family
27. Patrick Moore family
28. Daniel Miller
29. Richard Moore

1862 – Passage of Homestead Act

1863 – Joseph Owens came to the county, married Sarah Oliver

1866 – Construction of Union Pacific Railroad through Buffalo County

Buda Station

Elm Creek Station

1867 – Buffalo County surveyed and open to settlement

Dec. – First land filed upon – James Boyd, Boyd Ranch

First title west of Hall Co.

– 18 tax payers in the county, 3 gone by payment deadline in 1868

| 1867 Tax list - | Name                | Value      | Tax     | Date paid         |
|-----------------|---------------------|------------|---------|-------------------|
|                 | Beach               | \$1,080.00 | \$11.34 | March 17, 1868    |
|                 | Britt, Jno.         | 150.00     |         | Gone              |
|                 | Boyd, Jas. E.       | 6,830.00   | 71.72   | May 7, 1868       |
|                 | Boyd, Jos.          | 600.00     | 6.30    | May 7, 1868       |
|                 | Champlain, D. R.    | 750.00     | 7.88    | March 21, 1868    |
|                 | Dugdale, Hy (Henry) | 940.00     | 9.87    | March 21, 1868    |
|                 | Eddy, C.            | 715.00     | 7.52    | Gone              |
|                 | Estey, Wm.          | 1,140.00   | 11.97   | May 9, 1868       |
|                 | Gardner, G. G.      | 650.00     | 6.83    | June 24, 1868     |
|                 | Johnson, C. S.      | 475.00     | 5.00    | March 21, 1868    |
|                 | Myers, A.           | 425        | 4.47    | April 20, 1868    |
|                 | Oliver, Ed.         | 335.00     | 3.52    | Paid              |
|                 | Oliver, Sarah       | 540.00     | 5.67    | March 21, 1868    |
|                 | Statts & Wilson     | 3,760.00   | 39.48   | May 14, 1868      |
|                 | Thomas, Wm. D.      | 2,800.00   | 29.40   | May 18, 1868      |
|                 | Tague, Thos.        | 355.00     | 3.74    | May 1, 1868       |
|                 | Teats, J. H.        | 650.00     | 6.82    | Gone              |
|                 | Williams, A. J.     | 825.00     | 8.67    | February 24, 1868 |

1868 – 21 taxpayers

1869 – 20 taxpayers

1870 – Reorganization of Buffalo County; first County Board

38 taxpayers

2 filings for land

1871 – Designation of junction of UP & BMRR

Gibbon Homestead Colony

First, settlers in Kearney Junction

165 land filings

1878 – big jump in filings due to opening up of military reservation

## First filings by Township

Platte – 1878 – 36 filings

Shelton – 1870 – 2 filings

Sharon – 1871 – 22 filings including George Meisner

Gardner – 1874 – 7 filings

Cherry – 1876 – 1 filing

Gibbon – 1867 – 1 filing (James Boyd) No more until 1871

Valley – 1871 – 2 filings

Schneider – 1874 – 4 filings

Garfield – 1874 – 5 filings including Erastus Smith

Center – 1871 – 25 filings

Thornton – 1873 – 8 filings

Cedar – 1873 – 12 filings

Beaver – 1873 – 2 filings

Riverdale 1871 – 17 filings, Smith bros. listed first; Asbury Collins filed the following year

Divide – 1872 – 6 filings

Rusco – 1873 – 1 filing

Loup – 1874 – 8 filings

Odessa – 1871 – 2 filings (both were Crowells)

Grant – 1872 – 4 filings

Scott – 1873 – 2 filings

Sartoria – 1878 – 2 filings

Elm Creek – 1871 – 4 filings

Logan – 1878 – 2 filings

Armada – 1873 – 5 filings

Harrison – 1879 – 7 filings

|                           |                           |                    |                         |                        |                         |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|--------------------|-------------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|
| Harrison<br>– 1879 –<br>7 | Sartoria<br>– 1878 –<br>2 | Loup<br>– 1874 – 8 | Beaver<br>– 1873 –<br>2 | Garfield<br>– 1874 – 5 | Cherry<br>– 1876 –<br>1 |
| Armada                    | Scott                     | Rusco              | Cedar                   | Schneider              | Gardner                 |

|                                       |                                |                                    |                                 |                             |                          |
|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------|------------------------------------|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|--------------------------|
| - 1873 -<br>5                         | - 1873 -<br>2                  | - 1873 - 1                         | - 1873 -<br>12                  | - 1874 - 4                  | - 1874 -<br>7            |
| Logan<br>- 1878 -<br>2                | Grant<br>- 1872 -<br>4         | Divide<br>- 1872 - 6               | Thornton<br>- 1873 -<br>8       | Valley<br>- 1871 - 2        | Sharon<br>- 1871 -<br>22 |
| <b>Elm<br/>Creek</b><br>- 1871 -<br>4 | <b>Odessa</b><br>- 1871 -<br>2 | <b>Riverdale</b><br>- 1871 -<br>17 | <b>Center</b><br>- 1871 -<br>25 | <b>Gibbon</b><br>- 1867 - 1 | Shelton<br>- 1870 -<br>2 |

## Homestead Act

1862, May 20 – Homestead Act passed

Claim 160 acres (1/4 section)

Live on and cultivate the land for 5 years

US citizen who was head of a family or single over 21

Immigrant could file if they filed Intention of Citizenship

Land office for filing on Buffalo Co. land was in Grand Island, never Kearney

1870 and 1872 – Amendments to Homestead Act (related to military service)

Serve at least 90 days in Army or Navy during Civil War,

Get 160 acres on alternate sections within railroad 20-mile limit of alternating sections.

Others could only claim 80 acres within the railroad limits

Had 6 months in which to start living and cultivating the land

Soldiers could have an Agent file for them, others had to go to the land office in person

Soldier's filing fee \$18.00; citizen's filing fee \$14.00

5-year residence on the land had to be verified by 2 witnesses [in newspaper] + \$4.00 fee

Had 2 years after 5-year period was up to make proof

Or

After 6 months the claimant could buy the land

\$2.50/acre within the railroad limit

\$1.25 beyond the limit

Time requirement for ex-military:

Deduct time served (or enlistment period if wounded) from the 5 years

Must put in at least one year.

1909 – Enlarged Homestead Act –

Claim 320 acres (1/2 section)

targeted dry-land farming

1916 – Stock-Raising Homestead Act –

Claim 640 acres (whole section)

For ranching

1976 – Federal Land Policy and Management Act –

Ended homesteading in all states except Alaska

1986 – Homesteading ended in Alaska

Only about 40% of those making an initial claim completed the requirements

1.6 million homesteads were granted = 10% of US public land

Sources:

Bassett, Vol. I

1860 Federal Census